



THE EUROPEAN MEETING OF YOUNG ADULTS IN MUNICH

## Symbol of Peace, Sign of Hope

"The meeting is not over! The pilgrimage of trust will bring us closer and closer to one another." This conviction has rarely been so strong after a European meeting as it has this year. A few weeks after the meeting, many reactions confirm these words spoken by a priest from Munich. He, along with others responsible for young adult ministry in both the Catholic and Protestant churches, had taken an active part in the preparation, helping the parishes to become aware of the challenge and the significance of the European meeting.

Almost half of the parishes in the city are still holding a regular prayer, and preparation-groups are continuing different commitments, for example visiting people who live alone, centres for those seeking political asylum, and even young prisoners. Young people from other countries write that a new impetus and hope were communicated in a special way by the warm welcome they received in the parishes.

Anyone who was on the Theresienwiese when the 1200 coaches were getting ready to depart could not help but be struck by the emotion with which the participants said goodbye to their host families, who had come with them after the noon meal on the first of January. Sometimes you could see a car filled with leftovers from the meal pre-

pared in the parishes drive up to one of the buses that had to go the furthest distance and give them food for their journey. "It's as if we found a second family," said many people who stayed in people's homes.

For several months, appeals to welcome participants in families had gone out, but it was above all during the final weeks that doors opened. Seeing that so many people were going to come for the meeting, many agreed not to spend the end of 1993 just within their own family circle. "Christmastime for us is centred on the family; sometimes it's the only time we can gather together, but with our guests from Lithuania, who were so discreet and simple, it was even more beautiful." Sometimes elderly people showed trust and dared to open their doors in spite of com-

munications problems. The time spent with the families was short, just overnight and breakfast, but that was enough to create a climate of trust where the surprise was mutual: the host families admired the politeness and the discretion of the participants, and the participants were struck by the attentiveness and the generosity of the families, who sometimes even came to the station late at night to bring them home.

The welcome teams in the parishes were amazingly helpful. On the day of arrival, some stayed up till 2 or 3 in the morning, and even at that late hour they were able to find places where people could stay. Some parishes had to organize a welcome the second day as well, since many Hungarians and Romanians were delayed for 24 hours by a snowstorm. And then, the same teams organized the prayers and the morning meetings every day. The great precision of the organization did not stop people from improvising and finding last-minute solutions to unexpected problems. Many said later: "At the beginning, what was missing in our preparation was the heart. That's what the young people asked of us, and that's what we were able to share with them."

Those who stayed in one of the 150 schools made available by the city could not say enough to praise the parish teams that took care of the schools and made them warm and welcoming places. For the morning programme, the young people went to the parishes, and many were invited to eat in people's homes on January 1st.

In the parishes, some people had begun very early to prepare the welcome with enthusiasm. This was the case for example in Garching, where in order to give an air of festival to the preparation, they printed "European Meeting of Young People" on coloured balloons and distributed them to the children while giving information to the parents. Some even went to visit people at home to explain the meeting; others set up a stand on market day to talk to shoppers in the street. In some parishes, up to 300 participants were offered hospitality in families. The preparation teams were of different sizes, with different proportions of young people and adults, but they always created an atmosphere of trust

and took steps to meet people, sometimes with very practical questions as an excuse.

In one instance, a group which had to welcome a large number of participants in a school looked for ways of giving them a big breakfast, as is the custom in Germany. The baker agreed to bake cakes, so they went from family to family to collect flour, eggs, milk, chocolate, and so on. Then, on their own, others brought honey, jam, sausages, cheese... Through this concrete activity, families in the neighbourhood learned about the upcoming meeting.

The form of the meeting was flexible enough to be adapted to the situation of each parish, in the city-centre or in the suburbs, as well as in neighbouring villages where hospitality in families was easiest. Even St Michael's Parish, located on an air-force base at Fürstentfeldbruck, took part in the meeting. Since many military personnel wanted

breakfast every morning. Those who have nothing of their own showed that they could give of their heart!

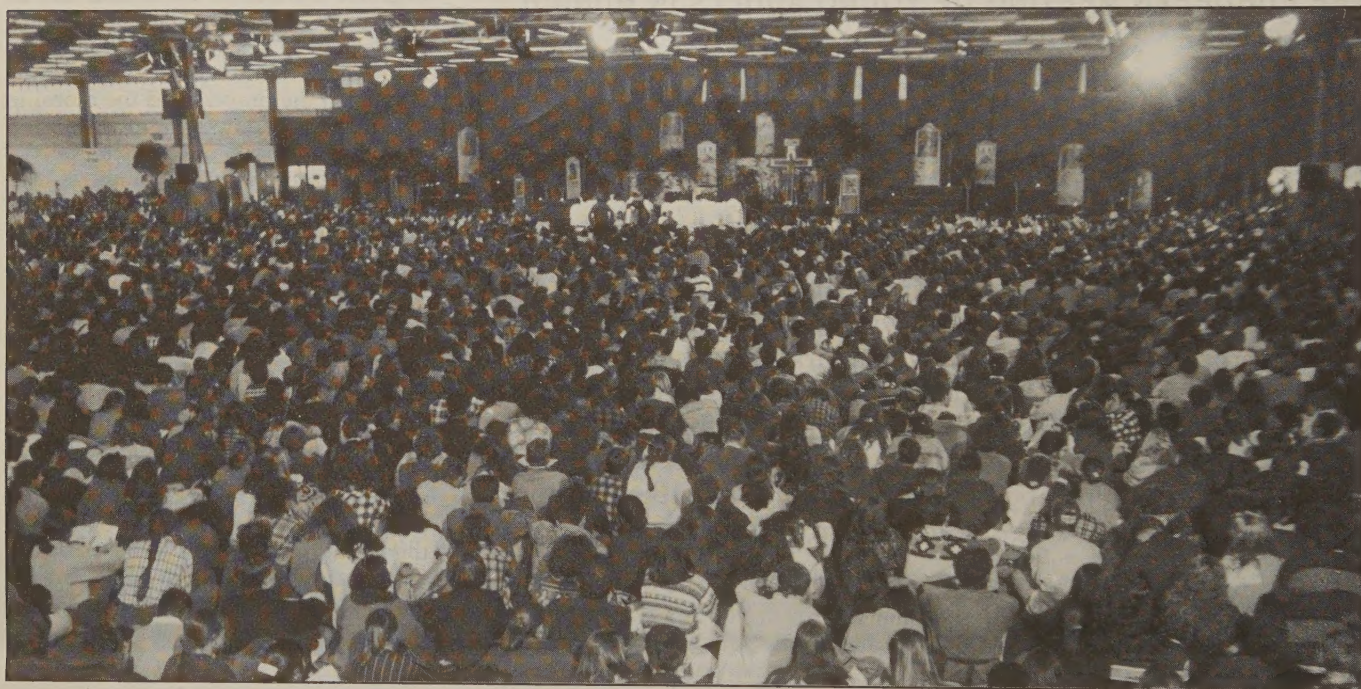
One of the parishes described its experience: "By working together, praying together, looking for solutions together, we got to know one another and discovered a new way of bringing our parish community to life, through the involvement of each person and the pooling of our different gifts. Now, quite naturally, we want to continue a simple prayer with all those who so desire."

The meeting was also such a powerful experience because the participants prepared themselves before com-

**A first in the huge halls of Munich: tens of thousands of young adults plunged into a deep silence lasting several minutes.**

priest in charge of young adult ministry for the Patriarchate of Moscow, 1200 Ukrainians, both Orthodox and Catholic, three buses of Bulgarians, who had never been so numerous, three buses from Serbia, including groups from Belgrade and Voivodina, and 1700 Croats and 2300 Slovenians. Some even made the journey from Albania. They joined the young people from the West and the South of Europe, and those from the North. In Italy, those on their way to Munich stopped in Verona on the evening of December 27th for a prayer organized by the young people of that city.

A hundred young adults from different countries gave their time to come already before Christmas to help out. Their help was precious, as was that of those who joined the work and animation teams and the singing group on December 26th. Thanks to the effort of all these teams, for example those who



to offer hospitality, they received permission to organize the welcome inside the base. Soldiers took part in the prayers, the times of sharing with young people from many different countries and, without a doubt, the most intense moment was the prayer vigil for peace.

A parish on the banks of the Isar already offers a welcome to homeless people on its property. The young people staying in a nearby school were surprised to find the homeless people themselves taking care of them. They lent a hand on the first day by serving tea and giving directions, then they helped to prepare

ing. In several countries, evenings or days of prayer and reflection enabled people to begin an inner pilgrimage before setting out for Munich. The preparation was well integrated into the life of the local churches, as was shown by the many prayers held before leaving or when participants returned.

Where did they come from? The Poles were the largest group. But there were also 2000 Hungarians and 2500 Romanians, whose coaches were trapped in a snowstorm for 24 hours. The 8000 present from the Baltic countries were not put off by a 100-hour journey. There were 400 Russians, accompanied by Father Valentinus, the

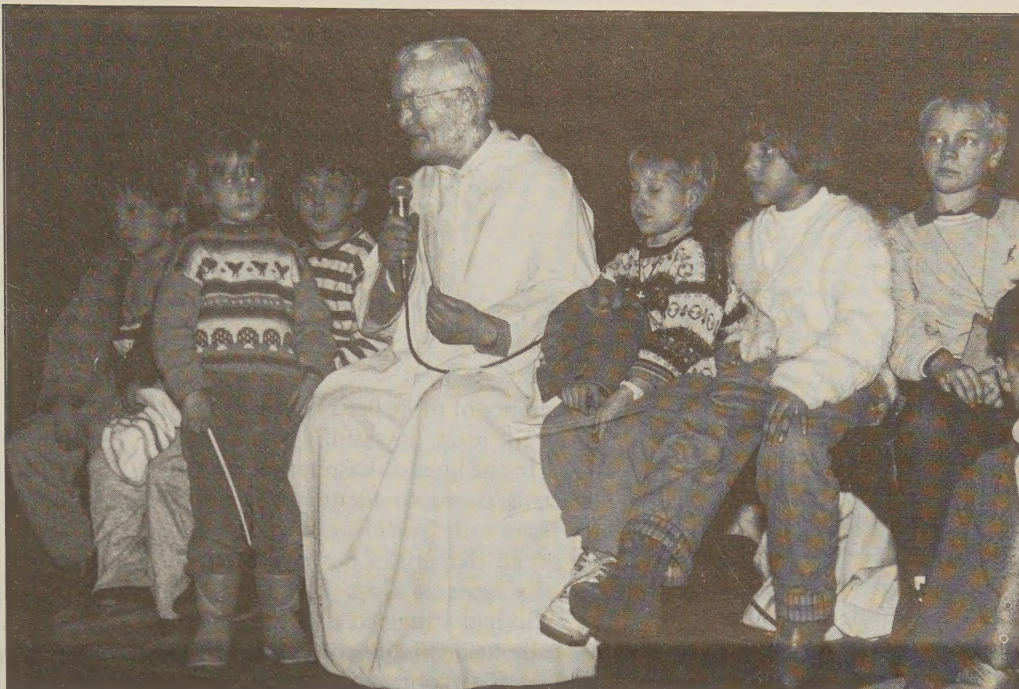
collected and sorted the waste from the meals, and thanks to the good will of all the participants, the huge crowd remained joyful and serene.

Observers from the press mentioned the seriousness and the tranquillity visible not only in the prayer halls, but also during the meals and in the means of public transportation. The presence of countless young people in the streets or the trains did not go unnoticed, but after the first surprise, many gestures of sympathy and welcome were forthcoming, even from people who knew nothing about the meeting. One old woman distributed sweets to the young people around

Every evening, in the company of children, Brother Roger gave a meditation. During one of them he made an appeal for AIDS orphans (see page 8).

Songs and prayers were heard in over twenty different languages. below, at left

Two hundred persons of different nationalities and all ages helped to sort 120,000 cartons of food for participants in the meeting. It was an enormous job, finished just in time for Christmas Eve. below, at right



her in the underground, and some unknown persons paid for a taxi for a handicapped girl from Poland who arrived at the railway station late at night.

The different administrations all worked together. The army provided tea and hot soup on the Theresienwiese, where meals were given twice a day in the open air to all the participants.

The meal preparation was the occasion for an unexpected common action: 120,000 cartons of emergency rations had been delivered on December 20th, and what needed to be reheated had to be taken out, and boxes for breakfast made up. This required the joint efforts of many different people: parishioners of all ages, mothers with their children, schoolchildren, young people who had come from Poland to help, and even adolescents sent by an association that organizes volunteer work to take the place of a prison sentence. Thanks to all of them, the meals were well organized.

During the five days of the meeting, the central point was the four huge halls of the Exhibition Centre of Munich. The times of common prayer were held there. Simple decorations, using orange-coloured fabric, icons, candles and greenery, transformed them into places of recollection. In each hall, people of five or six different languages gathered for prayer around a group of Taizé brothers. Midday and evening, this time of worship allowed everyone to go forward on an inner pilgrimage in the company of Christ. Every evening, Brother Roger gave a short meditation which was translated simultaneously into seventeen languages. At the end of the prayer, many remained around the cross for a long time, entrusting to Christ situations of suffering around the world.

Leaders of different churches and Christian communities took part in the common prayers: Cardinal Wetter, the

archbishop of Munich; Bishop Hansemann, the Lutheran bishop of Bavaria; the Russian and Greek Orthodox metropolitans, and a number of other bishops, including the French bishop responsible for young adult ministry.

The prayer in the parishes, every morning and on New Year's Eve, was also an intense moment. On December 31st, at about 11pm, in all the parishes, everyone came together for a prayer for peace. "We will never forget the moment when everyone, fully at peace, shared a sign of peace that arose from the depths of their being," wrote a girl from France. "We cannot forget that those who were expressing by that gesture a commitment to be bearers of peace are the children or grandchildren of those who yesterday were—and unfortunately still are today—at war with one another."

→ 7



# Weak in Christ

## 2 Corinthians 13,4

Christ was crucified because of his weakness, but lives by the power of God. And we too are weak in him, but we live with him by the power of God in us. (2 Cor 13,4)

Human genius constantly pushes back the bounds of the impossible. But the element of powerlessness which remains leaves us feeling ill-at-ease. We are disturbed, sometimes even ashamed, when confronted with incurable diseases, or the suffering of the innocent that seems to be without end. It is not a question of disappointment at not seeing our dreams fulfilled, but of pain at not being able to do what is necessary to give to all people a life of dignity.

What believer, then, does not wish that God would act: "O that you would tear open the heavens and come down; the mountains would quake at your presence" (Isa 63,19). Yes, if only God would come to put an end to wars, to famine, to epidemics... But why does God sit back? "Why do you sleep, O Lord?" (Ps 44,23).

God did not even intervene on behalf of the One who had all his love. When Christ was arrested and tortured, God left him powerless. "He was crucified because of his weakness." The mystery remains in total darkness.

In that darkness, Easter morning dawns. The crucified Christ "lives by the power of God." By his resurrection he himself is a "life-giving spirit" (1 Cor 15,45). He is God's continual intervention in the world.

But how mysterious this activity of God is! Human history is still characterized by the sign of the cross, a symbol of meaningless suffering ("They hated me without reason" John 15,25; cf. Ps 35,19). Who could count all those, both before or after Jesus, who have fallen helplessly—and who are still falling—in the face of the indif-

ference of those better off or the hatred of the more powerful.

In the light of Easter, the first Christians dared to identify the crucified Jesus with God. But in so doing, they set an element of powerlessness at the very heart of God. The apostle Paul, who had struggled the most energetically against this consequence of the Christian confession of faith, expressed it later on with the greatest clarity: he speaks openly of "God's weakness" (1 Cor 1,25)! Where people least expected it, in the helplessness of the weakest human being, God is present.

But in Christ's weakness, as in all that comes from God, there is a limpity: it is pure powerlessness, and nothing else. Jesus did not com-

promise the innocence of his weakness by threatening his torturers or by calling upon his friends to continue the struggle. When attacked, Jesus simply remained silent, and his life ebbed away.

Otherwise, God would have imposed his will. By the folly of his weakness, he turns everything upside down. "He does his deed—strange is his deed! He works his work—enigmatic is his work!" (Isa 28,21). The mysterious refusal of God to intervene by powerful means accomplishes more than anything else could. Those who discover with a shock that his love went to the point of suffering to torment in silence, "will remain with mouth shut when they learn what had never been told before" (Isa 52,15).

"Christ was crucified because of his weakness, but lives by the power of God." If God refused once and for all, out of love, to force a response, then out of love as well, he will not be satisfied until the very last creature responds to the call of his love. God's power lies in his tireless search for all who refuse him. Leaving them free, he cannot keep them from shutting the door on him. But still less can he resign himself to their refusal. Where a human being would give up the game, God perseveres with an inflexible passion.

"And we too are weak in him, but we live with him by the power of God in us." Sharing in the trials of Christ, we come to life like him. It can happen that we are harried on all sides, but "perplexed, we are not driven to despair" (2 Cor 4,8). Because of the resurrection, we no longer need to hate our powerlessness, nor to criticize that of others. God does not want to take away our weakness; simply, by making it his own, Christ purifies it of all rebellion. Freed from bitterness and regret, our weakness is compassion.

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*Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.*

**1 SUN** Jn 15.1-8 Ac 9.26-31  
Jesus said: Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit unless it remains part of the vine, neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

**2 MON** Jn 14.1-6 1 Co 15.20-28  
Jesus said: Do not let your hearts be troubled. You trust in God, trust also in me.

**3 TUE** Jn 14.6-12 1 Co 15.1-8  
Philip said to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus said, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."

**4 WED** Jn 14.12-16 1 Co 15.42-44  
Jesus said: I shall ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor who will stay with you for ever—the Spirit of truth.

**5 THU** 1 Co 15.44-49 Jn 14.18-21  
Paul writes: As we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the heavenly one.

**6 FRI** Jn 14.22-31 1 Co 15.50-53  
Jesus said: Anyone who loves me will keep my word, and the Father will love them, and we shall come to them and make our home in them.

**7 SAT** 1 Co 15.54-58 Jn 20.11-18  
Stand firm, let nothing shake you, be full of energy for the work of God, knowing that in the Lord nothing of your labour is wasted.

**8 SUN** Jn 15.9-17 Ac 10.25-48  
Jesus said: This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you.

**9 MON** Col 4.2-6 Jn 15.18-27  
Persevere in prayer, being watchful and thankful.

**10 TUE** Jm 5.13-16 Jn 15.26-16.4  
Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed.

**11 WED** Jn 16.12-15 Ep 6.18-20  
Jesus said: When the Spirit of truth comes, he will lead you to the complete truth, since he will not be speaking of his own accord but will say only what he has heard from the Father.

**12 THU** Mk 16.15-20 Ac 1.1-11  
**ASCENSION**  
Jesus sent out his disciples, saying: Go out to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation.

**13 FRI** Ep 1.17-23 Mt 28.16-20  
God has made Christ the head of the Church, which is his Body — completely filled by him. And he himself is filled by God in every way.

**14 SAT** Ep 2.1-6 Jn 20.19-23  
God is rich in merciful love. Because of the great love he has for us, he has brought us to life with Christ.

**15 SUN** Jn 17.11b-19 Ac 1.15-26  
Jesus prayed to his Father for his disciples, saying: Keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one as we are one.

**16 MON** Jn 16.29-33 1 P 2.4-6  
Jesus said: In the world you will have hardship. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

**17 TUE** 1 P 2.9-10 Jn 17.1-11  
Peter writes: Once you were not a people at all, and now you are the people of God.

**18 WED** 1 P 2.19-25 Jn 17.20-26  
Peter writes: There is merit in the sight of God if you put up with suffering you have not deserved. This is what you were called to do, because Christ suffered for you, leaving an example for you to follow in his steps.

**19 THU** Jn 21.15-19 1 P 3.18-22  
A third time, Jesus said to Peter, "Do you love me?" Peter was hurt that he asked him a third time, "Do you love me?" and said, "Lord, you know everything; you know I love you."

**20 FRI** Ac 20.22-25 Jn 21.20-25  
Paul said: I do not place any value on my own life, provided that I complete the mission the Lord Jesus gave me — to bear witness to the good news of God's grace.

**21 SAT** Jl 3.1-5 Jn 7.37-39  
The Lord says: I will pour out my Spirit on all humanity.

**22 SUN** Jn 4.14 Ac 2.1-11 Jn 15.26-16.26  
**PENTECOST**  
Jesus said: Anyone who drinks the water I give will never be thirsty again. The water I give them will become a spring of water within them, welling up to eternal life.

**23 MON** Jr 31.31-34 Mk 8.34-35  
The Lord says: I shall put my law deep within them, I shall write it on their hearts. I shall be their God and they will be my people.

**24 TUE** Mk 9.14-29 Ezk 37.11-14  
A man said to Jesus: I believe! Help my lack of faith.

**25 WED** Tt 3.5-7 Mk 9.30-32  
Through Jesus Christ, our Saviour, God has generously poured out on us the Holy Spirit, so that justified by his grace we may be heirs in hope of eternal life.

**26 THU** Mk 9.33-37 1 Co 12.13  
Jesus said: Whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.

**27 FRI** 2 Co 1.21-22 Mk 9.38-41  
God has set his seal on us and has put his Spirit in our hearts as a pledge for what is to come.

**28 SAT** Ws 1.7 Lk 15.1-7  
The Spirit of the Lord fills the world: it holds all things together and knows every world said.

**29 SUN** Mt 28.16-20 Dt 4.32-34,39-40  
Jesus, risen from the dead, said to his disciples: I am with you always, to the end of time.

**30 MON** Mi 6.8 Mk 10.13-15  
This is what the Lord wants of you, only this: to act justly, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.

**31 TUE** Zp 3.14-18a Lk 1.39-45  
Your God is with you. He will quiet you with his love, he will dance with joy for you.

Sometimes we are faced with difficult situations in our lives, with injustice. In such situations we can find that we are helpless, like the poor widow in the parable. Is there still any reason to pray? What is the meaning of prayer? Our prayer seems worthless.

How then can we pray unceasingly (v.1)? Jesus knows that we have this question in us. That is why he tells the story of a widow and an unscrupulous judge. It is a disconcerting example, not at all a pious story! Jesus does not want to make pious demands on us that will only exasperate us. "To pray without losing heart," like the poor widow, is not a law imposed upon us. Instead, we discover that perseverance has meaning. Constancy in prayer is what matters most, and not the form of our prayer, or a particular method, or a lot of fine words.

Why? The only thing the woman has on her side is time. For a long time (v.4) she keeps going back to the unjust judge, over and over again. Time is her friend; it's all she has. The widow only knows a few words. She keeps repeating them to the judge: "Give me justice!" (v.3). As time goes by, her arguments do not get any better. But something happens; something changes.

And the Lord said, "Listen to the unjust judge" (v.6). That judge is the utter opposite of God, and yet he says that he will give justice. How much more will God, who is justice itself, give justice! God is not far away; God knows; God is near.

- What helps me realize that time is on my side? How can I find the time to pray in daily life?
- What are those few words which suffice for me personally in prayer, and which I can entrust to Christ?

# MEDITATING ON THE WORD

## JUNE

*These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.*

**1 WED** Christ Jesus gave his life for us in order to redeem us from our faults and to purify a people to be his very own.

Tl 2.14 Mk 10.17-22

**2 THU** The children you love, Lord, will learn that it is not the crops of the earth that provide nourishment, but your word that supports all who believe in you.

Ws 16.20-21,26 Lk 9.11b-17

**3 FRI** St. Paul writes: I am certain of this: neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

Rm 8.35-39 Mk 10.23-27

**4 SAT** Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.

2 Co 5.17 Lk 19.1-10

**5 SUN** Taking a cup, Jesus gave thanks and he said to his disciples: "This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, which will be poured out for many."

Mk 14.12-16,22-26 Ex 24.3-8

**6 MON** Proclaim the Lord Christ holy in your hearts and always be ready to answer people who ask you the reason for the hope you have.

1 P 3.13-17 Mk 10.35-45

**7 TUE** "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked a blind man. "Rabbi, I want to see", he replied. And Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has saved you."

Mk 10.46-52 1 P 4.1-6

**8 WED** Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over many a sin.

1 P 4.8-11 Mk 11.15-19

**9 THU** Jesus said: When you pray, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive your sins too.

Mk 11.22-25 1 P 4.12-14

**10 FRI** Clothe yourselves in humility in your relationships with others, for God gives his grace to the humble.

1 P 5.5-11 Mk 11.27-33

**11 SAT** Paul writes to Timothy: Share in my sufferings for the Gospel, relying on the power of God who has saved us and called us to be holy.

2 Tm 1.8-9 Lk 17.20-21

**12 SUN** Jesus said: The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed which is the smallest of seeds, but which, once it is sown, grows into the biggest plant of all.

Mk 4.26-34 Ex 17.22-24

**13 MON** The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone: this is the Lord's doing.

Mk 12.1-12 2 P 1.1-4

**14 TUE** Seek perseverance, true devotion, brotherly kindness and love. If you live with these things, they will bring you to a real knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 P 1.5-11 Mk 12.13-17

**15 WED** Peter writes: Christ Jesus was glorified by God the Father. We heard a voice from heaven saying: This is my beloved Son, he enjoys my favour.

2 P 1.12-18 Mk 12.26-27

**16 THU** You do well to pay attention to the word of the prophets, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

2 P 1.19-21 Mk 12.28-34

**17 FRI** Jesus saw a poor widow put two small coins into the temple treasury and, calling his disciples, he said, "In truth I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all the others, for they all gave out of their wealth, but she has put in everything she possessed."

Mk 12.41-44 2 P 3.3-4,8-10

**18 SAT** Relying on God's promise, we are looking towards a new heaven and a new earth where justice will dwell.

2 P 3.11-18 Mk 16.1-7

**19 SUN** When Jesus had calmed the storm on the sea, the disciples were overcome with awe and said: Who can this be? Even the wind and sea obey him.

Mk 4.35-41 Jn 38.1,8-11

**20 MON** God has rescued us from the rule of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Col 1.9-14 Mt 5.1-12

**21 TUE** Jesus said to his disciples: You are the light of the world. A city built on a hilltop cannot be hidden.

Mt 5.13-16 Col 1.15-20

**22 WED** Paul writes: Persevere, standing firm on the solid base of faith, without drifting away from the hope held out by the Gospel.

Col 1.21-23 Mt 5.23-24

**23 THU** Jesus said: Give to anyone who asks you, and if anyone wants to borrow, do not turn away.

Mt 5.33-42 Col 1.24-29

**24 FRI** St JOHN THE BAPTIST Zechariah prophesied: Blessed be the Lord, for he has visited and redeemed his people, and established for us a power of salvation.

Lk 1.57-66,80 Ac 13.22-26

**25 SAT** In the mystery of Christ all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.

Col 2.1-5 Mt 5.43-48

**26 SUN** Jesus said: Do not be afraid, only have faith.

Mk 5.21-43 Ws 1.13-15/2.23-24

**27 MON** Jesus said: When you give, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your generosity is secret. And your Father, who sees all that is done in secret, will reward you.

Mt 6.1-4 Col 2.6-10

**28 TUE** You were dead because of your sins, but God has raised you up with Christ. He has forgiven us all our sins.

Col 2.12-14 Mt 6.5-6

**29 WED** SS PETER and PAUL Jesus asked his disciples: "Who do people say I am?" "Some say John the Baptist," they answered, "some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But you," he said, "who do you say I am?" Peter spoke up and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Mt 16.13-19 Ac 12.1-11

**30 THU** Paul writes: Exterior rules are only the shadow of what is to come: the reality is the body of Christ.

Col 2.16-23 Mt 6.7-15

# JOHANNINE HOURS

MATTHEW 12,15-21

*Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.*

Everywhere he went, Jesus knew how to awaken hope. Like no one else, he came up with the word on act that could bring people back to life. In this text, we see at first that he is followed closely by the crowd; he cannot get away from them. But the words in the passage help us understand that he is willing to help without a trace of hesitation: "and he healed them all" (v.15). But immediately he leads them further on: "He warned them not to make him known" (v.16). The evangelist, apparently astonished at Jesus' attitude, turns to a text from the book of Isaiah. How can we understand the behaviour of this man who brings others to life and who does not want to draw attention to himself?

The prophet describes a man upon whom the Spirit will rest and who will proclaim judgment, in other words all the good that God asks for and helps to grow in us. But this servant achieves this without raising his voice (v.19) and with a delicacy that does not break even the reed about to fall. The evangelist contemplates Christ: he sees the One sent from God approach a suffering person without breaking him or her, or come to someone on the edge of despair without extinguishing the weak light that remains. Christ never despises anyone. He sees what lies in the depths of every human being he meets. The person standing in front of Christ is never viewed merely as a means to communicate a message of some sort. That person is the one for whom Christ came, for whom he wants to give his life.

- In this passage, what challenges me the most? What do I see in Christ's attitude?
- Who do I know who succeeds in awakening hope around them? What is their "secret"? Can we see a reflection of Christ in them?

We were able to advance towards unity," wrote some young people from Provence, "because everyone had the necessary openness of heart, but especially because everyone entered into a context of simplicity, where no one is privileged—sharing the same meals, the same accommodations, the same means of transportation. Sharing with those from other countries allowed us to experience a powerful communion, full of comprehension and forgiveness. How can we not have the impression that we are at the heart of the Europe we wish to build?" Celebrating the fact of being together, united in a common search for Christ, meant at the same time manifesting a sign of peace visible to many: "I see a cause for hope, a light shining in a world that too often appears disenchanted because of its harshness," wrote UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali in a message sent to the meeting.

In order that this experience of peace and reconciliation might be rooted in a real-life situation, it was important for the meeting to put the participants in contact with the challenges of solidarity and peace today.

A sign of hope in this respect was the presence of young adults from Serbia, Croatia and even a few from Bosnia, in addition to the Bosnian children who had already stayed in Taizé. One of the young people who welcomed them, Vesna, from Zagreb, said of the young Serbs, "They are here for the same reasons as I am—to pray, to search for the way of Christ, so we can search together. That is what Christ asks of us: stop, now. Stop hating each other; love one another. What if I were the one who was born a little further east, in Belgrade instead of in Zagreb?" For six days, many spontaneous meetings allowed a dialogue to begin. Afterwards, some Croats asked how they could keep in touch with the Serbs they met in Munich.

For almost all the participants, the parishes had prepared visits to places of hope, in other words encounters with people working for solidarity in their neighbourhoods. In the course of the mornings, many participants, after having obtained special permission, visited homes for people trying to obtain political asylum. In these homes, refugees from many different countries live, while they wait for a decision that will allow them to remain in Germany. In their precarious situation, they were happy to see that there was room for them in the programme as well. The parishes are doing a lot to help them, and these short moments of sharing sometimes provided an impetus to keep contacts alive afterwards.

On two occasions, young people were able to visit a prison. In Landsberg, fifty minutes from Munich, a few young prisoners together with their chaplain came every morning to the prayer in the parish, then stayed for the times of sharing, sharing their lives and their hopes with friends from other countries, and even helping to translate. Very quickly everyone forgot that some of them would be sleeping in prison that evening!

Some districts of Munich are known as places of great poverty, where people live whose only income is public assistance. Surprisingly, even in these neighbourhoods a welcome was possible. The participants in the European meeting stayed in a school, but the district joined in the welcome in different ways.

"Some sisters have been living here for a long time, and their witness impressed us very much," said four Italian girls who had agreed to help with the animation. "With them we went looking for 'places of hope.' We found two rest homes for the elderly, and the young people went one morning to visit them. There was also a more informal welcome, when young people from the district came to visit us in the school because they saw the lights on, or when a couple brought us cakes for the New Year's holiday. In this environment of great poverty, it was wonderful to see communion growing among the participants, to notice how each person became more attentive to the others, and to see the joy become stronger and stronger."

With almost as much enthusiasm as they showed during the meeting, the parishes of Munich now are looking for ways to continue. First of all, there were many meetings during which the host families shared their experiences, with joy and often with an emotion that was still perceptible. On this occasion, in many parishes a regular time of

prayer open to all was begun. Those in charge of young adult ministry in the diocese sent to all the parishes suggestions for re-reading and reflecting on the letter *From One Beginning to Another*. These suggestions concern parish life, for instance trying to see what can be done to place a greater concern for those excluded from society at the heart of parish activity. In addition, a time of prayer will be held on the last Sunday of every month in the cathedral of Munich. Likewise, the daily midday prayer that began during the preparation is continuing in one of the churches in the city centre. And to show that the pilgrimage of trust is continuing, many are preparing to come to Taizé.

This beautiful continuity, along the lines of the meeting itself, reveals a desire that was already present. What was missing was enough trust to make it possible to begin. "For our parish," someone noted, "the meeting gave new impetus, a new breath of life, simply by revealing that there are people ready to get involved. Seeing what the young adults were able to accomplish, I found new hope. What seemed impossible became a reality." "Among the many experiences of the meeting, several are going to bear fruit," wrote someone from another parish. "We discovered a complementarity between groups and generations; we learned to look beyond internal difficulties to focus on the life of our parish; we realized that we are capable of taking risks, to open ourselves more widely. We saw that we didn't need a very long preparation, lots of material resources or extensive training and abilities to live a more inclusive parable of communion."

**Meeting place for the meals: Theresienwiese. Thanks to the fine weather, comfort was done without, but not the joy found in communion.**



# Helping Children

The Gospel tells us that one day, a leper came toward Jesus. In those days, leprosy was a fearful disease. In addition to the physical pain, lepers suffered from being excluded from society as outcasts and felt the shame of being considered "unclean." But instead of running away, Jesus "filled with compassion, put out his hand and touched the man, saying, Be clean!" (Mark 1,41).

In Jesus' day, children were another category of persons on the edge of society. Their parents loved them, of course, but there was no place for them in public life. They were not taken seriously, for they were not yet able to take on responsibilities or, especially, to read and study the Scriptures. One day, Jesus placed a child in the midst of his disciples and said, "Whoever welcomes a little child like this one in my name, welcomes me." And he added, "The Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like them" (Mark 9,37; 10,15).

This attitude of Jesus, to go toward those excluded from the life of society, has remained alive throughout the centuries. Today, it is seen in a particular way in those who take care of persons with AIDS and children suffering from the consequences of this epidemic. In East Africa, as in other parts of the world, tens of thousands of children have lost both mother and father because of AIDS, and the number of orphans is growing rapidly.

In Munich, Brother Roger launched an appeal for solidarity with these children, to nourish them and to ensure their schooling.

In TANZANIA, through medical students we know, we have been put in touch with ten families of orphans in Dar-es-Salaam. Their situation recapitulates that of so many others across the African continent. There is a mother who, on her deathbed, entrusted her six children, aged 5 to

18 years, to neighbours who already have five children of their own. Or a 33 year-old pregnant woman who, in addition to her own three children, has to care for the six children of one of her sisters who died of AIDS and the three children of another sister who is very ill. Or a young man of 18 who has a part-time job in a garage and who takes care of his three younger siblings. In other cases, grandparents are raising their grandchildren, and some of the orphans are handicapped.

The church worker who knows these families wrote to us, "Your proposal to support some families of AIDS orphans fills us with hope." It is a very concrete gesture that can grow according to the means at hand.

The region of Masaka, on Lake Victoria in UGANDA, is another area that is very affected. We are told that there are no families in that area without AIDS orphans. We can help care for them through mobile teams that go from village to village. They do not place the children in orphanages where they would be in danger of losing their roots and their culture, but provide material aid that stimulates sharing by reinforcing already existing bonds of kinship and relations between neighbours. In some cases, this aid is administered by small Christian communities linked to the local parish.

It takes approximately 200 to 300 US dollars to care for one of these children for a year.

- It is also essential to help
- in Africa, children of lepers in Ethiopia
  - in Europe, children and elderly persons in Bosnia
  - in Asia: children in Bangladesh
  - in Latin America: children in the North-East of Brazil

Contributions can be sent to: From the UK: "Operation Hope," Account no. 50005576/53, Co-operative Bank PLC, Code 089075, 84 West Street, Sheffield S1 3SX. From the USA: "Operation Hope," c/o Taizé, 413 West 48th Street, New York NY 10036-1225. From IRELAND, CANADA, AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, SOUTH AFRICA, etc., contributions can be sent in the same way as sums for subscriptions to the Letter from Taizé, making sure to indicate with your payment "for Operation Hope."

# Philippines

## A Time of Awakening

Jenny, from Iloilo, spent several months in Taizé. For her, as for many others, the continuity between her experience in Taizé and her commitment at home is essential:

These months in Taizé have been like a time of awakening. I have been discovering the importance of what we are doing at home. I have realized that we are united with Christ, not only through the prayers but also through the people we are working with.

When I get home, I shall be continuing our programme of visits: to people in prison, to old people in a house for the aged, to children in an orphanage. A very important part of our activity is our visits to lepers. They live together in a community.

I am particularly sorry for the children who have to stay there because their parents cannot leave. Can you imagine the welcome they give us? They can't go out and see the beauty round about so they think our presence is a very important way of assuring them that God cares for them.

We have discovered how important these visits can be for those who join us. They come to realize what they can do for others and so they discover a joy.

## Letter from Taizé

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